

# **Cognitive Restructuring for ADHD- related Shame and Procrastination**

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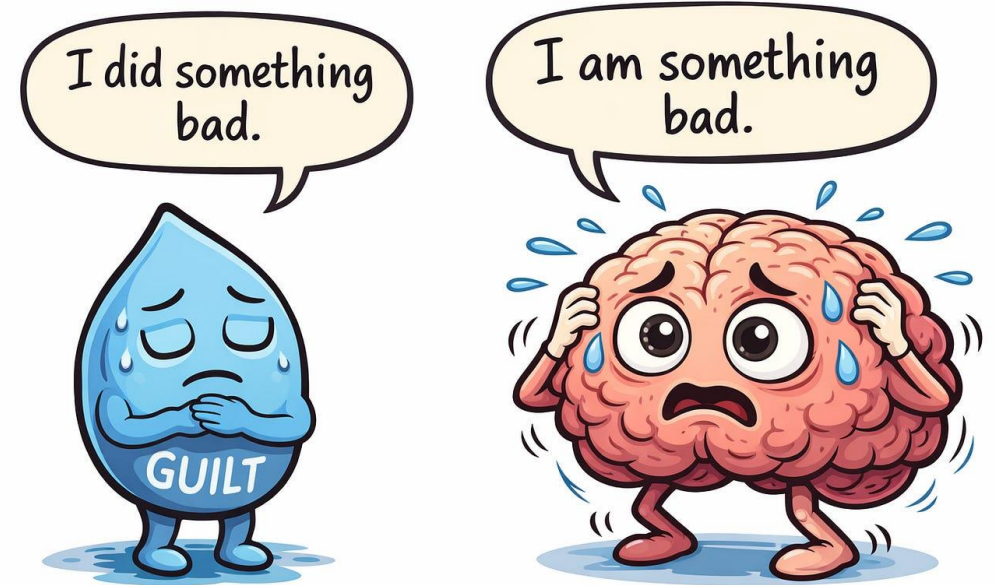
# Why Shame Drives Procrastination in ADHD

- • ADHD: Difficulties with task initiation & self-regulation
- • Repeated failures... **chronic shame**
- • Shame activates avoidance, not motivation
- (Barkley, 2015; Brown, 2013; Tangney & Dearing, 2002)

# The Shame- Procrastination Loop

- Task feels overwhelming
- Avoidance/procrastination
- Shame & self-criticism
- Increased emotional threat
- More avoidance

(Pychyl & Sirois, 2016; Sirois, 2014)



# Cognitive Restructuring: What Actually Helps

- Identifying & reframing distorted self-talk in ADHD
  - "I failed"..."My brain stalled under load"
  - "The day is ruined"..."I can still create momentum."
- Reduces shame, restores executive function

(Beck, 2011; Gerber et al., 2013; Neff, 2003)

# Two Strategies After Procrastination

- Same Day Recovery Plan
- Procrastination Loop

# After the Procrastination: Same-Day Recovery Plan

I've wasted the whole day... now what?

- 1. Accept: Don't Analyze**
- 2. Salvage the Day with the *Rule of One***
- 3. Do a 10-Minute Momentum Sprint**
- 4. Create a Soft Landing for Tomorrow**

Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002

Baumeister & Vohs, 2007

Barkley, 2015

Brown, 2013

Hayes et al., 2006

Neff & Germer, 2013

# Same-Day Recovery Plan Step 1: Accept- Don't Analyze

Overthinking why procrastinated keeps you stuck

Say: "Okay. Today didn't go as planned. What can I still do?"

Acceptance shifts the brain from shame to problem solving.

Acceptance reduces emotional reactivity and supports behavioral re-engagement.

# Same-Day Recovery Plan Step 2: Salvage the Day with the "Rule of One"

Pick **one**:

- One task
- One step
- One email
- One page

**Why it works:** One completed action interrupts the “tomorrow spiral”  
Builds **dopaminergic reward feedback.**

Baumeister & Vohs, 2007

Barkley, 2015

# Same-Day Recovery Plan Step 3: Do a 10-minute momentum sprint

- Set a 10-minute timer
- Job = **start**, not finish
- ADHD brains often re-activate once motion begins

Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002

Brown, 2013

# Same-Day Recovery Plan Step 4: Create a Soft Landing for Tomorrow

Even if you can't work:

- Open the assignment
- Lay out materials
- Write tomorrow's first step

## Why it works:

- Reduces next-day initiation friction
- Lowers cognitive load at task re-entry

Zeigarnik, 1927

Eyal, 2014 (behavioral momentum principles)

# Breaking the Same- Procrastination Loop with Real-Time Tools

1. Call out the Shame Voice
2. Shift Self Judgment to Self-support
3. Use a Body Double
4. Reset the Nervous System First
5. Create a shame safe first step

# Breaking the Same- Procrastination Loop: Call Out Shame Voice

- Shame says: *“You always mess up.”*
- Respond: *“This is a feeling, not a fact.”*
- Labeling reduces emotional intensity

Lieberman et al., 2007

# Breaking the Same- Procrastination Loop: Self Support

Replace:

“Why did I do this again?”

with

“What do I need right now to begin?”

## **Why it works:**

Engages executive functioning instead of threat response

Neff, 2003

Germer & Neff, 2019

# Breaking the Same- Procrastination Loop: Use a Body Double

Sit or connect with someone for 5–10 minutes  
Another nervous system = faster activation

Vygotsky, 1978

Barkley, 2015

# Breaking the Same- Procrastination Loop: Reset the Nervous System First

- 60–90 seconds:
- Cold water
- Deep breathing
- Stretching

## Why it works:

Physiological regulation precedes cognitive initiation

Porges, 2011

# Breaking the Same- Procrastination Loop: Shame Safe First Step

- Open the document
- Read instructions
- Copy/paste the prompt

## Why it works:

- Low emotional weight bypasses failure fear
- Builds immediate momentum

*Shame is not a motivator, it's a barrier.*

*Reduce shame first, and the task becomes doable again.*

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